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NSC BRIEFING

8 December 1954

BACKGROUND ON YOSHIDA'S OUSTER

I. Resignation of Yoshida cabinet is culmination of efforts conservative opponents to overthrow prime minister. These efforts successful only because of decision of Socialists to co-operate with Yoshida's conservative opponents.

A. Proposed no-confidence motion claimed Yoshida guilty of: "secret diplomacy," erroneous economic policies, degradation political morals by scandals, and political confusion resulting from prime minister's long stay in power.

II. Opposition to Yoshida as a personality developed over several years; promoted by his methods which violated Japanese political customs.

A. Yoshida's unilateral decisions, dependence on small inner "palace" guard violated the tradition of wide consultation among influential interests, and of agreement by compromise. Led to charges dictatorship, lack of democracy, and nickname of "one-man Yoshida."

B. Failure turn over leadership to rival Ichiro Hatoyama in 1952, according to promise made when Hatoyama purged in 1948, a violation of system of obligations and duties highly prized in Japanese society. Yoshida claimed Hatoyama's health barred his taking burden.

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III. Yoshida's long tenure also thwarted Japanese desires for a "break" symbolizing end of occupation, recovery of independence.

A. Shinsuke Kishi, spark plug of anti-Yoshida movement, told embassy officers in August 1954 he considered Yoshida outstanding statesman, but the Yoshida era (occupation period) was over.

B. Yoshida accused of being too dependent on United States support; unable and unwilling to stand up to US demands; result was that Japan has unequal status under present treaties and agreements.

IV. These criticisms were secondary factors, however.

A. The basic cause of his downfall is in the nature of Japanese political parties.

B. Parties are composed of small cliques of political leaders surrounded by their loyal followers. These factions loosely federated into political parties.

C. Yoshida's long tenure frustrated the ambitions of these other leaders.

D. No faction has been strong enough to force its will on the others; none willing to make the concessions needed for uniting the conservatives.

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V. Yoshida's role as "bridge" for American aid factor aiding him continue in power.

- A. In May Yoshida told Ambassador Allison Japanese people listened avidly to what "American hot dog" might say with implication if US wanted him to stay in power we should arrange "presents" for him on his Washington visit.
- B. Kishi in August expressed fear possible "presents" might be interpreted as US desire maintain Yoshida in office; hoped US would wait for new prime minister before extending economic aid.
- C. Significantly anti-Yoshida group held off formation new party until prime minister returned relatively empty-handed insofar as expectations were concerned. In any event US "presents" could have only temporarily bolstered Yoshida, final course of events dependent on domestic Japanese conditions.

VI. Yoshida's downfall began when his party broke ranks March 1953 with defection Hatoyama group, precipitated no-confidence vote, Diet dissolution election April 1953.

- A. Yoshida forces won plurality in election, but, Yoshida became prime minister again only because the Socialists abstained from supporting his conservative opponent (Shigemitsu of the Progressives).

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B. Socialists have since become more sophisticated; indicated they will support second strongest conservative to promote conservative split, perpetuate political instability for Socialist advantage.

VII. On 24 November, Japan Democratic Party was inaugurated-- composed of the former Progressive and Japan Liberal Parties and some 37 dissidents from Yoshida's Liberal Party.

- A. Ichiro Hatoyama became head of the Democratic Party and party's choice for prime minister.
- B. Shinsuke Kishi, wartime Tojo cabinet minister, is moving force behind the new party.
- C. Formation of new party, and the Socialist decision to co-operate with it, sealed Yoshida's doom.

VIII. Combination of 120 Japan Democrats with 134 Left and Right Socialists (chart) gave opposition more than enough votes to unseat Yoshida government by a no-confidence motion.

- A. Yoshida had choice of resigning or dissolving the lower house and calling a new election.
- B. Yoshida, in stepping down before vote, bowed to pressure from his own party and from financial interests who viewed alternative of general election as both costly and likely only to benefit left-of-center parties.

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